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Evaluating Internal Communications at the Lenexa Fire Department

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of other is

set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the

language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

Two concurrent strategic planning processes five years apart identified internal communications as a problem needing addressed at the Lenexa Fire Department. This resulted in the problem statement used to generate this research paper: the problem is a need has been identified for improved internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department. The purpose of this research was to determine what opportunities existed for improvement in internal communications in the Lenexa Fire Department. This was accomplished using descriptive research using the following four research questions. How have other agencies and businesses improved internal communications? What are the current trends in internal communications? What internal communication processes currently exist at the Lenexa Fire Department? What opportunities exist for improved internal communications in the Lenexa Fire Department? The research for this paper was conducted using a combination of review of existing literature and research as well as two questionnaires administered directly to Lenexa Fire Department personnel. The results clearly found that there are many opportunities for improvement for the Lenexa Fire Department including the areas of communication methodology, policy, and technology. Recommendations were made in specific areas including making use of technology such as social media and video conferencing, encouraging more face to face communications, finding ways around communication roadblocks, and evaluating overall communication performance on a regular basis.

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The efficient communication of information is necessary for the success and even survival of any organization. Although many organizations are moving to improve their outside communications with customers and the public, their internal communications amongst personnel often lag behind and can be a great source of confusion and a hindrance to success. "When organizations develop a communications strategy, they often focus on external stakeholders. Internal, or employee communications, frequently get short shrift" (Zanke, 2008). Efficient internal communications can do much to create a smoothly operating workplace where "employees may be motivated to support the organization's direction; misunderstandings and rumors may be limited" (Enness, 2003).

The Lenexa Fire Department is no stranger to struggles with this very issue. The problem is a need has been identified for improved internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department. This has been a known problem for some time which has been identified by multiple internal work and focus groups. The purpose of this research is to determine what opportunities exist for improvement in internal communications in the Lenexa Fire Department.

The research for this problem was accomplished using a descriptive research methodology. The research was narrowed down using four questions. The first question was how have other agencies and businesses improved internal communications? The second question was what are the current trends in internal communications? The third question was what internal communication processes currently exist at the Lenexa fire Department? The last question was what opportunities exist for improved internal communications in the Lenexa Fire Department?

Background and Significance

The Lenexa Fire Department is an all career department serving the citizens of the City of

Lenexa, a suburban community in Johnson County, Kansas which is part of the greater

metropolitan Kansas City area. The Department has five stations spread out over approximately

34 square miles serving a population that jumps from around fifty thousand at night to an

estimated two hundred thousand at peak periods during the day. The Department is made up of

83 personnel across three operations shifts plus a supporting administrative staff. The

Department is highly successful and professional having achieved such distinctions as being

internationally accredited by the Commission of Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) under

the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) since 2002 and earning an Insurance Standards

Office (ISO) rating of two.

In the fall of 2010, the Department participated in a complex strategic planning process

which was facilitated by professional coordinators and consisted of an external customer

component along with an internal stakeholder's component. The internal stakeholder workgroup

consisted of 24 Department personnel that spent three days charting the course of the Department

for the next five years and beyond. This workgroup was made up of a broad cross-representation

of department personnel from all ranks and areas. Achievements included the development of a

new mission statement, motto, vision, and goals. While examining strengths and weaknesses, a

list of problems needing addressed was developed for attention.

One of the problem statements produced by the strategic planning process identified

internal communications as an ongoing concern. An interesting aspect to this is the fact that this

same problem was listed during the strategic planning process five years earlier. However, an

overall change in executive leadership including the fire chief had taken place since then which

brought a whole new style of communication and management style. Although many who had participated in the planning process were vocal that communications had drastically increased and improved, it was still felt that there was a problem.

The identification of internal communications as a problem over two consecutive five year planning periods by different groups of diverse department personnel is significant. Although many changes have take place in both leadership and policies, the problem did not go away. Therefore, a need has been realized to truly define the scope of the problem as well as offer up solutions for correction. This research project is the beginning step in determining that information and solution.

No matter how much success an organization enjoys, growth and improvement cannot stop or that success will stagnate and decline. The Lenexa Fire Department is no exception and must constantly work to identify shortcomings and improve on deficiencies like the one identified with internal communications. An improvement in internal communications will help the Lenexa Fire Department in future endeavors by making the organization more efficient and productive. A well informed workforce will enjoy greater morale and a positive culture will be enhanced. Administrative goals and strategies are much more likely to be embraced and aided when communications are open and direct.

The problem of internal communications is not limited to just the Lenexa Fire Department. It is a recurring theme which is echoed across the fire service and across organizations of all types and sizes around the world. Multiple research papers have already been written by Executive Fire Officer Candidates dealing with their own organization's particular spin on the problem of internal communications. This topic focus shows the need for this type of research and resolution across the fire service. This topic also meets several of the five strategic

goals of the United States Fire Administration. The goal most closely addressed however would be improving the fire and emergency services' professional status. To be truly professional, a service must constantly strive to overcome problems and be efficient in operation and design. This cannot happen if communication internally is a problem.

This research project was conducted as a requirement for the Executive Development course for the Executive Fire Officer Program for the National Fire Academy. The internal communication problem clearly ties into multiple aspects of that course. The two main course goals deal with the development of teams and management and leadership techniques in complex organizations. Teams cannot exist, let alone efficiently function without proper and adequate internal communication. Management and leadership of any organization also cannot be effective or relevant if information isn't correctly exchanged. Therefore, by researching available opportunities for improving internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department, the goals of the Executive Development course are clearly supported.

Literature Review

The research of current literature focused on both the overall problem of improving internal communications and the purpose of exploring opportunities for improvement in that area. To ensure a thorough coverage of relevant material, the literature review looked at a broad representation of this project's research questions. The areas of focus included the current trends in internal communications, available communication processes for modern organizations, and how other agencies and businesses improved internal communications. When needed, the review was narrowed down to subject matter relevant to organizations similar in design to public safety agencies. It is important to note that the study of internal communications seems to naturally focus the information either on technological methodology or internal organizational policy. The

research for this paper tends to follow more the technological methodology rather than internal policy although the two tangents sometimes interchange through necessity.

Communications in general including those taking place internally in an organization are influenced heavily by many factors including technology, culture, and trends. There has been an obvious shift in communications methods in the past several decades. Face-to-face communications and conventional mail ("snail mail") gave way to phone conversations and faxes which in turn gave way to email which now seems to be losing ground to text and instant messaging. A survey several years ago by META Group, Inc. which was designed to find the preferred method of business communication found that an overwhelming 80% of surveyed businesspeople believed email was more important than the phone for communications. Email is also quickly replacing faxing for document delivery with a 50% drop in document faxing in just five years as noted by the META Group, Inc. ("80% of Users," 2003).

Respondents to the META Group, Inc. survey identified the following top three reasons why email was the preferred communication medium: "email facilitates communication with multiple parties, email enables more rapid communication, and email generates a written record of the interaction". In contrast, the top three reasons why respondents still preferred the phone over email were: "the phone is more personal, it creates better context for communication, and it helps clarify the tone of the message". The survey data also suggests that emailed messages are sometimes seen "as impersonal and prone to misunderstanding, because verbal cues and context are missing. ("80% of Users," 2003).

Taking a broader view than just email, the Internet has revolutionized many aspects of communication. Social media has become as common as the telephone was twenty years ago. Agencies and areas are constantly finding new ways to utilize the Internet for communication,

both internally and externally. Kathy Bell in 2004 wrote an article about how the greater Kansas City Metropolitan area was deploying an Internet-based emergency information sharing system that easily crossed city, county, and state borders.

Common internal communication tools used by organizations today include newsletters in either hard-copy or electronic format, and intranet sites. Newsletters allow for messages to be passed for all to see but can also allow for submissions from all areas of an organization and encourage employee buy-in while still offering control over content. A blog which is short for web log is a type of message board where someone, often an executive, can post thoughts and messages for viewing. Intranet sites are electronic portals available only within an organization that allow for communications such as news and messaging. Message boards on either Intranet or Internet sites "allow staff members to communicate and share ideas regarding a particular sector of the business and be heard" (Luther, 2009). Luther also points out that in-person staff meetings still have their place in the modern age but meeting notes and references can be saved and posted online for added availability and use.

It is difficult to think about modern communication without picturing the telephone. The telephone, although tried and true for decades, has undergone some modern improvements. These improvements can include "individual" phone line extensions, conference call and "all-call" capabilities, and voicemail messages sent out via emails and available online. Conference calls are often seen as a valid way to reach multiple people with a message or problem while taking into account busy schedules and locations of responsibility. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) which transmits telephone calls over the Internet is now seen as a viable alternative to the traditional telephone infrastructure.

Video conferencing has taken the conference call to the next level and no-longer strictly requires expensive investments in dedicated systems. Internet based services like Skype can provide free audio-video conferencing abilities to anyone with a computer and Internet access. Christy Luther (2009) even points out that such audio-visual conferencing can be recorded as a podcast and posted to the Internet or an Intranet for future viewings. Audio-visual capabilities are now emerging on mobile platforms (cell phones) as well. This capability helps to eliminate the disadvantages of not being able to read non-verbal or non-visual communication cues.

Instant-messaging used to be a fad reserved for the young or technology savvy among Internet users. Instant messaging is now being seen as a valid combination of telephone and email allowing for interactive, real-time communication between people in different areas while allowing for greater multi-tasking capabilities than available when on a conventional phone call. Luther (2009) points to IBM as an example of sponsored instant messaging where the company offers a secure service that blocks outside parties and allows for internal communication.

Cell or mobile phones are common to most people in both business and personal environments. The modern cell phone often has the ability to send and receive text messages. This allows for the equivalent of computer-based instant message communication taking place in an anywhere, anytime environment. Text messages tend be brief and informal by design and often encourage communications outside of normal business times and environments. This style of communication also serves to blur the formal lines between management and employees often seen in more traditional communication styles.

Another internal communication process that is slowly gathering steam is the wiki which is an information sharing online environment that is closed to those outside the organization. A wiki encourages the sharing of ideas and can also blur "the lines of office hierarchy" (Luther,

2009). Unlike a newsletter which communicates from one sender to many recipients, a wiki allows many total users. A similar idea uses social media such as Twitter to send messages directly to recipients on either their cell phones or computers. Recipients are able to respond or send out messages of their own.

The discussion about Twitter brings up social media in general. Although some may lament that social media is the death of conventional communication, Jon Gibs expresses the believe that social media actually causes an increase in emails and that people continue connections they make on social media via email, telephone, and even face-to-face (Gibs, 2009). Sarah McGoldrick (2010) believes that social media is an ideal solution for departments with limited communications budgets. The variety of social media makes it likely that a particular need can be met utilizing various offerings. It also means that care must be taken to shield sensitive or inappropriate information from accidental or purposeful disclosure.

Knowing about modern trends and processes is half the battle but the changes must still be implemented effectively. According to Stromberg Consulting, "most new communication channels haven't replaced previous ones but merely added to the overall volume of comms" (The top seven macro-trends, 2006). Utilizing the latest and greatest communication technique won't help much if it is paired up with and encumbered by other, more antiquated processes. Ron Corona and Rick Wimberly (2009) state that the trend in the Fire Service today is to utilize a "system of systems" that combines different delivery modes to maximize overall effectiveness. This is a great process as long as the system is efficient and effective rather than cumbersome. A study conducted by Christopher Enness on the effectiveness of internal communication strategies in the fire service suggests that "no one internal communication strategy can act as a

generic strategy for all organizations: the 'one size fits all' approach to internal communication within the fire service appears to be wholly inappropriate" (Enness, 2003).

The question then becomes, how have others improved their own internal communication processes? Various searches of relevant literature turn up many references to improving internal communications and ways to make the communications happen. However, very little exists on how exactly organizations and agencies have made their own improvements. Some examples of recommendations were found, particularly in several research papers written for the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) at the National Fire Academy.

In the EFOP research paper, "Improving Organizational Communications Between Line and Staff Personnel in Fire Departments," Christopher Norris recommends video conference briefings from administration to all of the fire stations, as well as regular shift meetings with each group to allow for face-to-face dialogue and interaction. In another paper, "Improving Internal Department Communications" by Gary McQueen, some of the recommendations included more frequent staff meetings, more face-to-face including informal communications, wider distribution of department memorandums, redundant information paths, and known communication failure evaluations. Robert Boyd recommends that leaders "constantly seek dissenting opinions" to allow employees to "present fresh ideas and creative input" in his paper "A leader's role in fostering internal communications" (Boyd, 2010). He also recommends implementing a strategic planning process and having personnel rotate through other areas of the organization for greater understanding.

The three example EFOP research papers cited above show that problems with internal communications are not a rare event in the fire service. Although each of the papers gives an organizationally specific look at the problem, some of the more universal recommendations

show merit for any agency trying to improve communications. These examples also serve to reinforce the previous reference to Christopher Enness when he stated the "'one size fits all' approach to internal communication within the fire service appears to be wholly inappropriate" (Enness, 2003).

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

The concept of the problem for this research topic was first discovered during two concurrent five-year strategic planning processes conducted by the Lenexa Fire Department as detailed in the Background and Significance section earlier in this paper. The groups involved in both of those processes identified internal communications as a problem needing addressed. This problem was then refined into the problem statement and research questions utilized in this research paper.

Research question number one "How have other agencies and businesses improved internal communications?" and question number two " What are the current trends in internal communications?" were answered utilizing research into existing subject-related studies, trade journals, media and literature. This research utilized not only the resources available at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center but also those to be found on the Internet and in print media. Assisted research papers (ARPs) written by students in the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) proved to be a relevant resource as several dealt with the same topic from the aspect of other agencies.

Research question number three "What internal communication processes currently exist at the Lenexa fire Department?" and question number four "What opportunities exist for improved internal communications in the Lenexa Fire Department?" were answered through

Departmental questionnaires and direct observation. Question four also benefitted from the same research as questions one and two.

There were actually two questionnaires completed by Lenexa Department personnel utilizing Survey Monkey as a polling tool. The first main questionnaire was utilized to gather some basic demographic information on respondents and then sought to determine the opinions of the personnel on several topics including the current effectiveness of internal communications at various levels, the effectiveness of current communication techniques, as well as the support for alternate communication methods. This questionnaire purposely sought opinions on subject matter and respondents were encouraged to be as honest as possible through anonymous data gathering. This questionnaire can be found in Appendix A in its entirety including response data. Out of 83 possible respondents, 52 completed the questionnaire (63%).

A second follow-up questionnaire was then distributed again using Survey Monkey with only two questions. This follow-up questionnaire sought to narrow down opinions on specific communication methodologies such as social media, both what is being used now and what could possibly be used in the future. This questionnaire also sought only the open and honest opinions of the respondents. This follow-up questionnaire can be found in Appendix B in its entirety including response data. Out of 84 possible respondents, 46 completed this questionnaire (55%).

Assumptions and Limitations

Research for this paper consisted in large part on sources that were unable to be directly verified as is often the case with media, especially when published on the Internet. The assumption was then made that the authors of these works acted with integrity and honesty when compiling their own research and publishing the results. An exception to this would be the EFOP

ARP papers obtained from the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center since the

papers were known to be peer reviewed and subject to subject scrutiny.

The questionnaires utilized to gather Lenexa Fire Department specific data were designed

to seek opinion only with the assumption that anonymous submission would encourage open and

honest answers and provide for a greater respondent participation rate. It is understood that a true

survey must be validated in many ways including a proper sample of target audiences reached.

However, this questionnaire specifically avoided these tasks as its purpose did not require nor

would have benefited from such methodology.

The research contained in the paper was meant to apply specifically to the Lenexa Fire

Department. An outside researcher attempting to replicate the results of this study would have

limited success due to the subjective nature of the internal response data. It is assumed that the

external research portion could be replicated particularly if the same sources were used.

However, a researcher utilizing alternate sources might meet with different results depending

upon gathered data. This research was also contained mainly to a narrow focus trying to

determine the problem as it pertains directly to the Lenexa Fire Department. A broader research

effort might come up with varied results that would be more statistically viable for industry wide

application.

<div align="center">Results</div>

The question of how other agencies and businesses have improved internal

communications was answered purely through research of existing studies, trade journals, media,

and literature. Although plenty of literature exists pertaining to the problem of internal

communications, methods used for internal communication, and even possible solutions to

problems, not a lot exists for what other agencies have actually done to improve their own

communications. To get enough information, it became necessary to broaden the question slightly to include what has been suggested for improved internal communications. Again, as mentioned in the literature review, available information for internal communications tends to naturally trend either in the direction of technological methodology or organizational communication policy. The data gathered and utilized to answer this question mainly followed the technological pathway although the importance of policy often intermingles.

The broadening of the research opened up more information for review including several research papers written by National Fire Academy (NFA) Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) candidates. Some of the possible solutions offered up for improving internal communications by EFOP participants include video conference briefings from administrators to personnel, regular shift meetings, and more frequent staff meetings. Other solutions included more face-to-face including informal communications, wider distribution of department memorandums, and redundant information paths The evaluation of known communication failures was mentioned as a possible way to continue learning about the problem.

Research shows that it is important to reach out to your people and survey their knowledge of your organization's products and services on a regular basis according to Deborah Zanke (2008). This gives an updated view of the current communication flow. She recommends making use of things like staff memos and emails, meetings of all sizes, newsletters, employee feedback mechanisms, and intranets. However, you must constantly evaluate how these tools are used and their effectiveness. Don't ignore the importance of the grapevine or office gossip in your organization and always include this in your evaluations.

Internal communications must be strategized and well thought out in order to be successful. A proper strategy ensures "that you are focusing on the right things at the right time

and that you are making an impact" (Local Government, 2009). A proper strategy requires a detailed action plan. This needs to start with an audit of your current internal communications, getting the perspectives of personnel from all levels of the organization. Make sure that communication is two-way and honest, even when the news is bad. Find out and utilize the communication methods that personnel prefer. Don't forget to share external news with internal personnel. No one wants to read about their own organization in the paper to learn new information.

The question of what are the current trends in internal communications was answered purely through research of existing studies, trade journals, media, and literature. The current trends question research focused even more narrowly on the technology versus the policy aspects of internal communications. However, some of the trends did look at policy. It was also necessary to broaden the search criteria to include organizational communication rather than just internal communications. This allowed for more overall information which was sorted out for relevancy.

One emerging trend found in research and particularly discussed in the article *The top seven macro-trends in internal communication* by Stromberg Consulting (2006) was that of segmentation and globalization in communication methodology. This is necessitated by the differences inherent in a workforce that is transitioning from the Baby Boomer generation to Generation X and beyond. Expectations in both message and medium are different across the generations and must be identified and taken into account. Modern agencies also must realize that cultural differences and even language barriers are not a purely external communication problem anymore and must be acknowledged internally.

The literature review earlier in this paper mentioned the problem of organizations adding communication methodology without eliminating older styles resulting in overload. This is resulting in the trending need for simplification either by segmentation of communication participants or by cutting through the clutter with reduced or better aligned methodology and technology. Communications can also be personalized to the personnel involved, often resulting in a more positive reaction to and understanding of the communicated information.

Communication technological trends are constantly evolving and resulting in more opportunity but also sometimes overload and confusion. Therefore, it is important to understand the available styles and methods on at least a broad scale. This is particularly important when it comes to broad sweeping changes such as social media. Social media in its various formats provides many budget friendly ways to positively interact with internal personnel (as well as external customers).

Communications internally in organizations range from face-to-face conversations to electronic postings on the Internet. Some of the more traditional and less technologically dependent methods of internal communication include face to face conversations, briefings, staff meetings, and physical bulletin boards showing memorandums. The telephone, although long used as a common communication technology has evolved into a tool allowing for both personalized communication as well as group communication. The modern telephone system can include tools like voicemail accessible over the Internet and conference calls. The telephone system can now escape the traditional infrastructure and take advantage of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) which allows for phone calls to be transmitted over the Internet saving costs and easily crossing borders.

The traditional telephone call has also evolved from voice only communications to face to face conversations, albeit using a video picture. Multiple people can converse while seeing each other in real time. This allows for non-verbal communication signals to be sent and received, long a problem of both telephone and even email. The Internet allows for low-cost and even free versions of video conferencing using sites like Skype. Although some of these systems require a computer with Internet access, modern cell phones and mobile computers can often accomplish the same task over digital cell systems.

Few can argue that email has become the internal communication methodology of choice amongst most modern organizations. The survey and related report by META Group, Inc. mentioned in the literature review found that 80% of surveyed businesspeople relied more on email than the telephone. The same report also showed that email has all but replaced the fax machine for document transmission ("80% of Users," 2003). Although it is possible to find many opinions expressing the idea that email has become the death of face to face communication, few can argue its common acceptance and use.

The Internet has caused a general communication revolution. It has changed the way people are entertained, get their news, and keep in touch. Social media is a broad ranging term covering mass communication tools available using the Internet. Common platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc. have taken the world by storm. Many believe that social media has resulted in the collapse of entire governments in countries like Egypt and Libya as citizens can no longer be kept in an information vacuum and are therefore more able to hold their rulers accountable. Any organization that ignores the communication possibilities offered by Social Media will quickly find themselves out of the communication loop. Information can and will still be exchanged about that organization but the style and quality of that information can quickly

become negative rather than positive without official input. Because social media uses widely and publicly available hosting platforms, it can provide high quality and highly visible communications at a relatively low price.

The Internet's little brother, the intranet has also become a valuable trend in organizational communications. An intranet allows for network style communications and information sharing but that network is restricted internally to the organization. This allows for greater security and control for the organization. Electronic bulletin boards can replace physical bulletin boards, instant messages can replace notes and even emails, and the information flow can generally improve. The electronic newsletter, although a valuable tool of the intranet, only allows information sharing from one user out to many. A wiki on the other hand allows for an electronic newsletter style of communication where members of the organization can interact.

The mobile phone can now be found in almost everyone's possession whether a personal resource or business provided. The modern mobile phone now allows for much more than just a phone conversation. Email and Internet access are now common features on many phones as well as common Social Media sites. Text messaging is also a common mobile phone communication tool allowing for short written messages to be sent immediately between users. Texting has quickly become one of the communication styles of choice among the younger generations. Some of the more advanced mobile phones as mentioned before even offer video conferencing capabilities.

The research question of what internal communication processes currently exist at the Lenexa Fire Department was answered by department personnel directly by the way of voluntary and anonymous questionnaires. Two questionnaires were completed as detailed in the procedures section. These questionnaires along with response data can be found in their entirety

in the appendices. The last research question of what opportunities exist for improved internal

communications in the Lenexa Fire Department also relied heavily on these two questionnaires

although some of the research of existing studies, trade journals, media, and literature mentioned

before also has direct bearing.

As discussed in the procedures section, the first main questionnaire (Appendix A) was

utilized to gather some basic demographic information on respondents and then sought to

determine the opinions of the personnel on several topics including the current effectiveness of

internal communications at various levels, the effectiveness of current communication

techniques, as well as the support for alternate communication methods. This questionnaire

purposely sought opinions on subject matter and respondents were encouraged to be as honest as

possible through anonymous data gathering. Most questions were answered using strongly agree,

agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree as answer choices. For the purpose of

analyzing results, agree and strongly disagree are typically added together as are disagree and

strongly disagree.

The first two questions simply attempted to gather some basic demographic information

on rank and tenure with the Lenexa Fire Department (LFD). The tenure was fairly evenly

distributed across the year ranges with the majority falling into the 6-10 year range. As a

Department with a relatively young workforce, this entirely met expectations. The rank /

responsibility responses when compared to know Lenexa Fire Department personnel numbers

showed that 61% of front-line personnel, 68% of front line or administrative officers, 80% of

mid-level management, 25% of executive staff, and 100% of administrative / clerical personnel

participated. This showed a consistent participation among each division consistent with the

overall department personnel participation except for executive staff which was considerably

lower.

A majority of respondents (61.5%) felt that current methods of internal communications

are sufficient although 21% were undecided and 17.3% felt the opposite. All respondents agreed

that a strong internal communication process is essential to the success of the organization.

59.6% of respondents felt that the LFD makes sufficient use of modern technology (equipment)

in internal communications while 13.5% where undecided and 26.9% disagreed. A similar

question pertaining to sufficient use of modern communication mediums (rather than equipment)

at the LFD actually had more (50%) disagreeing with 9.6% undecided and 40.3% agreeing. This

seems to show that personnel feel that adequate equipment is available but available mediums

such as Social Media aren't being fully realized. 38.5% of respondents did agree that Social

Media could have a positive impact but a large 30.8% were undecided showing that more

education might be required as to opportunities. The same percentage (30.8%) also seems to

disagree with Social Media having a positive impact.

Question 8 asked respondents whether they would support receiving information from the

Department on personally owned devices such as cell phones and computers. An overwhelming

80.7% indicated support with 9.6% being undecided and 9.6% disagreeing. Question 9 then

changed course and asked whether respondents felt that all necessary information gets to where it

needs to go. Although 44.2% agree with this statement, it is interesting to note that not one

respondent "strongly agreed". Conversely, 32.6% disagreed with the statement. Unlike the zero

"strongly agree" answers, 3.8% of respondents did strongly disagree. 23.1% were undecided.

Question 9 showed an interesting follow up to Question 8. When the question was

changed slightly to as whether the respondent felt that information is evenly distributed across

like levels of responsibility in the Department regardless of station or shift, answer types

definitely changed. Again, as in question 8, there were no "strongly agree". However, the

"agree" respondents dropped to only 21.2% while disagree (34.6%) and strongly disagree

(19.2%) combined for clear majority of 53.8%. 25% were undecided. This shows that as you

drill into individual areas of communication within the Department as opposed to the overall

Department, opinions change.

Question 11 seemed to echo popular sentiment echoed in research. It pertains to the

Department "Grapevine" and asked whether information was typically relayed faster this way

than via official channels. 61.5% agreed with this statement while 23.1% disagreed and 15.4%

were undecided. Question 12 was designed to specifically target a rumor one often encounters

when discussing common roadblocks to internal communications. It stated that knowledge is

sometimes withheld because "information is power". 51.9% of respondents agreed with this

statement while 30.7% disagreed and 17.3% were undecided.

Question 13 was another question aimed at a sentiment that one often hears from the

front line workers of an agency. It stated that communication is a one-way street that comes

down from above but doesn't go the other way. The highest percentage of respondents disagreed

with this statement (51.9%) while 28.9% agreed and 19.2% were undecided. Question 14 took

this overall thought on a tangent and asked whether respondents felt they could openly

communicate with anyone in the Department at any time regardless of rank or position. Although

40.3% agreed with this statement, 44.3% disagreed with 15.4% being undecided. When these

two question results are compared together, it seems to show that personnel overall feel that

communication can move both up and down the organization but that not everyone is as open as

everyone else. Question 15 simply stated that there are things I need to know that just don't get passed along. 38.5% agreed with this while 38.4% disagreed and 23.1% were undecided.

Questions 16, 17, and 18 tried to drill down to specific levels of management. Question 16 referred to information being shared evenly across the Department by executive level management: 45.1% agreed, 33.3% disagreed and 21.6% were undecided. Question 17 asked the same but referred to mid-level management: 36.5% agreed, 28.9% disagreed, and 24.6% were undecided. Question 18 referred to front-line supervisors: 53.9% agreed, 28.8% disagreed, and 17.3% were undecided. This seems to show that respondents felt that front line supervisors did the best job of communicating information followed by executive level management. Mid-level management had the lowest agreement percentage.

When asked in question 19 whether they felt comfortable communicating with their immediate supervisor, respondents overwhelmingly agreed (84.3%). Only 9.8% disagreed with this and 5.9% were undecided. When asked in question 20 whether they felt comfortable communicating with everyone in their chain of command, the majority still agreed (64.7%) with 25.5% disagreeing and 9.8% being undecided. This seems to show that most respondents had good communication relationships with their immediate supervisors but that level of satisfaction dropped when additional levels were added. In question 21, respondents were asked whether they would feel comfortable disagreeing with someone with a higher rank if done with respect and in the proper setting. 58.8% agreed, 31.4% disagreed, and 9.8% were undecided.

Questions 22 and 23 were designed purely to draw on the opinions and feelings of respondents when comparing their organization to others in the local area (question 22) and across the nation (question 23). Respondents weren't expected to know definitively but it was hoped their answers would provide some insight into how they felt Lenexa Fire Department did

comparatively. When comparing communications at LFD to other similar organization in the

area, 45.1% felt LFD was better, 19.6% disagreed, and 35.3% were undecided. The same

question compared across the nations had 44.6% agreeing, 17.3% disagreeing, and 48.1%

undecided. These questions seem to show that more respondents felt that LFD came out ahead

when compared to other similar organizations but many were unsure. None of the response

categories were overwhelming.

Question 24 simply allowed respondents to provide free text additional comments or

suggestions. This proved to be interesting in that respondents were able to take advantage of the

anonymity of the questionnaire process and voice opinions. 12 respondents took advantage of

this opportunity. The verbatim responses can be found in Appendix A and should be reviewed by

the reader for proper evaluation and impact. Four respondents refer directly to mid-level

management as hindrance to the communication process. Two respondents refer to the need for a

better use of technology and methodology in communications. Multiple respondents refer

various aspects of communication in general, especially between differing ranks or across shifts.

Two of the responses commented on the make-up of questions in this questionnaire. The one

thing these responses show is that there is a need to allow free form communication whenever

opinions and feedback are truly valued.

The second follow-up questionnaire (Appendix B) sought to narrow down opinions on

specific communication methodologies being used now and what could possibly be used in the

future at the Lenexa Fire Department. There were only two questions in this questionnaire.

Unlike the first questionnaire, these questions were looking for rankings as opposed to the "agree

or disagree" format of responses.

The first question gave a list of example communication mediums including face to face, telephone, mobile phone, push-to-talk, two-way radio, alphanumeric pager, text messaging, email, instant messaging, physical bulletin board, distributed paper newsletter, electronic newsletter, Blog, Website postings, Facebook, My Space, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media. Respondents were then asked which of the communication mediums were effective or would be effective for internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department. The respondents were allowed to select as many as applicable in their own personal opinion. Overall responses were then tallied for each medium. Response results are shown in Appendix A both by numbers and percentages and shown on a bar graph. Face to face came out on top followed by email. Telephone and Text messaging came next followed by mobile phone, electronic newsletter, and then alphanumeric pager. These were followed by push-to-talk (Nextel), website postings, instant messaging, and distributed paper newsletter. Bringing up the rear were two-way radio, Facebook, Twitter, physical bulletin board, Blog, other social media, and YouTube.

The second question again gave some example communication types similar to question one. However, respondents were asked to rank the types in order of preference for internal communications with 1 being the top choice and 12 being the last choice. The responses are shown in Appendix B both by tallied number ranking and percentage as well as on a bar graph. It is important to realize that on the bar graph, the smaller the bar, the higher the type was actually ranked. Face to face came out on top followed by the telephone, then email, text messages, then alphanumeric pager, online bulletin board, push-to-talk, two-way radio, physical bulletin board, and then overall social media.

The overall responses to these two questions seem to show that respondents identify with what they are currently using and are comfortable with (face-to-face, email, phone,

alphanumeric). Social media and similar trending mediums tended to rank lower. This seems to

be in opposition to what research into current trends shows at least in regards to social media.

Face to face and email ranked highly which was to be expected and is in line with research.

Discussion

Most personnel at the Lenexa Fire Department (LFD) felt that current methods of internal

communications are sufficient although 17.3% disagreed. However, when respondents were

asked whether technology and equipment used in internal communication were sufficient 26.9%

disagreed. When the question was changed to the sufficiency of communication mediums rather

than equipment, the respondents who disagreed rose to 50%. This shows that when asked

overall, personnel didn't really see a problem but when forced to break the communication

process down into components, more problems were realized, particularly in the way we

communicate.

When the medium of social media was brought up, as many respondents were undecided

as to the value as were those that felt it would or wouldn't help although a slim majority felt it

would help. The majority view does comply with review of existing literature as most of this

seems to point towards social media being the next crucial step in how we communicate

internally. Sarah McGoldrick (2010) in particular describes how social media is an ideal solution

when communication budgets are limited but quality communications still need to take place.

However, the fact that equal numbers of personnel either disagreed or were unsure about the

value of social media cannot be overlooked. When asked to specifically choose effective

communication mediums, specific social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter ranked

toward the bottom of overall responses. The answer to this seeming contradiction to existing

literature research seems to lie with the undecided respondents as this argues that many just

aren't aware of what is available in this arena. An interesting aside to this is to have an impact, social media must be accessible, even some may argue, during off work hours. The vast majority of LFD participants expressed willingness to use personally owned devices such as computers and mobile phones to receive communications.

44.2% of LFD respondents believe that information gets to where it needs to go which isn't overwhelming. However, the majority of respondents changed their answers when asked whether information is shared evenly across the Department with only 21% agreeing with this. This shows that personnel believe there are communication road blocks and information is not fully accessible by all. In contrast, over 61% of respondents believe that the grapevine, the informal gossip style of information relay, is the fastest means of internal communication. This is supported by the article, Grapevine Communications, which states "Sometimes the managers show preferential treatment and favor some employees giving a segregated feeling to other employees. Thus, when employees sense a need to exchange their views, they go for grapevine network" (Grapevine Communications). This shows a communication breakdown on several levels by the organization which should be addressed.

Often, people believe that communications flow only one direction, from the top down. However, LFD respondents overall disagreed with this concept. The majority however disagreed with their ability to communicate across the Department regardless of rank and responsibility. As mentioned in the results, this shows that overall, personnel feel that communication can move up and down the organization freely but not everyone is as open as everyone else. When asked about communication with specific levels of authority, the majority felt that all levels of supervision are accessible. Front line supervisors were rated the most accessible followed by executive level. Mid-level management had the lowest overall accessible agreement of the three

categories. Further questions supported this as respondents expressed the greatest level of comfort communicating with immediate supervisors but the level of satisfaction dropping as additional levels of rank structure were added to the communication process.

Respondents who took advantage of the ability to free text additional comments had a few common themes. Several of the respondents directly expressed the feeling that communications varied greatly across ranks and shifts with several directly pointing at mid-level management as a hindrance to communication. Several also mention the need for a greater use of technology and communication mediums in day to day business. The comments overall, although voiced by only 23% of respondents, were supported by the overall percentage responses of the questionnaires in a less direct fashion.

When questioned directly about what communications mediums were effective or could be effective, respondents seem to overall stick with what they are used to in current communications. Face to face communications were by far the preferred method which is supported by other's research including Gary McQueen who states "face to face methods usually are the most effective ways to communicate" (McQueen, 2010). Email was the next choice which is also supported by research including the META Group, Inc. survey which found that 80% of surveyed businesspeople believed email was the preferred method of business communication. The first response to start breaking out of normal everyday business communication was text messaging. This can be attributed to the common personal use of this communication medium via the mobile telephone which most fire service personnel carry. This is also supported by the early question in which over 80% of respondents supported receiving information via their personally owned devices such as mobile phones.

Overall literature research embraces newer trends such as social media and the wiki which allow for efficient multi-direction communication without breaking currently strained financial resources. That same research recognizes that people still feel the need for personal contact and feedback which can only come from face to face, in person communications. Lenexa Fire Department personnel overall support these same tenets although show a little more conservative approach to actual communication mediums which can partially be explained by a sense of comfort with the known. Department personnel clearly indicate discrepancies in current communications across the entire organization with more emphasis placed on participants rather than methods.

The organizational implications of the overall research presented in this paper cannot be ignored. Clearly problems are present although there is also satisfaction with many areas. By taking this research as a first step, further research and action into specific areas of internal communications could make the Lenexa Fire Department more efficient and productive while increasing employee buy-in to organizational principles and even enhancing morale.

Recommendations

The research here is only a first step in defining the problem. Further research needs to be conducted digging deeper into various aspects of internal communication. Clearly, improvements can be made both from a technology and methodology standpoint. Organizational policies and procedures can also be developed which significantly improve the overall process.

The first general recommendation is to explore more fully the opportunities which exist for enhancing internal communications. Personnel have clearly indicated their willingness to receive communications on personal devices. This should be taken advantage of with tools like Twitter and text messaging. This could not only improve internal communications from a general

standpoint but could be a viable emergency contact medium for things like incident personnel

call-back. The low acceptance of some of the tools by Department personnel in contrast to

current research indicates that education into opportunity and benefits needs to take place.

The next recommendation is to fully examine communication pathways internally. The

traditional fire service hierarchy encourages a strict chain of command approach to

communication. This is often very important in emergency situations. However, in day to day

internal communications, a flatter approach to communications encouraging flow in all

directions would be beneficial. Redundant pathways for the message could also help to overcome

obstacles that sometimes exist, particularly when they occur at consistent choke points in the

communication chain.

Another general recommendation is to embrace face to face communication. This is

clearly indicated in both literature research as well as Department questionnaire results. This can

take place in traditional methods such as informal conversations, staff meetings, and personnel

briefings. However, the concept of face to face communications can take place utilizing

technology as well when one looks into video conferencing. This would allow for all the

subtleties of face to face communications including body language and verbal and non-verbal

cues while enabling management on tight schedules to interact with more personnel in a shorter

amount of time. This can even be done cost effectively if options like Skype are utilized which

allow for free Internet video conferencing. Sessions can even be recorded to allow personnel that

miss the original message to review at a later time.

Another recommendation is to regularly evaluate communications. Known failures in

communications should be clearly researched and actions taken to prevent future episodes.

Personnel satisfaction should be evaluated at all levels on a regular basis to ensure improvements

are made and problems are not ignored. Personnel from all levels should be encouraged to voice concerns, constructive criticisms, and even praise when something is working as it should.

Future readers should realize that this research primarily focuses on the internal environment specific to the Lenexa Fire Department. Research can be undertaken in other organizations in a similar fashion however. First, take advantage of the strategic planning process which can clearly chart the future of your organization but can also identify recurring problems such as this one. Take the time to explore current trends and research in internal communications. Although research related to human and organizational behavior and dynamics can often be slow to change, trends in any field like communications can change rapidly. The key then becomes researching your own internal environment. This can only be done by engaging the internal stakeholders at all levels. Tools like the questionnaires utilized in this research can be adapted to any organization and provide a picture of opinions and beliefs which can be invaluable to improving communications.

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    turn-employees-into-ambassadors/

Appendix A

LFD Internal Communications Questionnaire

Question 1

Please identify your primary responsibility at LFD:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Front-line personnel (FF, FM, MFF, FAO, LT)	63.5%	33
Front-line supervisor or administrative officer (Captain level)	25.0%	13
Mid-level management (Battalion Chief level)	7.7%	4
Executive Staff (Division Chief, Fire Chief)	1.9%	1
Administrative / Clerical	1.9%	1
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

Question 2

Please identify your LFD tenure range:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-5 years	19.2%	10
6-10 years	36.5%	19
11-15 years	13.5%	7
16-20 years	15.4%	8
21+ years	15.4%	8
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

Question 3

I believe that current methods of internal communication are sufficient		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	1.9%	1
Agree	59.6%	31
Undecided	21.2%	11
Disagree	15.4%	8
Strongly disagree	1.9%	1
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

Question 4

I believe that a strong internal communication process is essential to the success of this organization:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	72.5%	37
Agree	27.5%	14
Undecided	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
	answered question	51
	skipped question	1

Question 5

I believe that LFD makes sufficient use of modern technology (equipment) in its internal communications:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	9.6%	5
Agree	50.0%	26
Undecided	13.5%	7
Disagree	23.1%	12
Strongly disagree	3.8%	2
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

Question 6

I believe that LFD makes sufficient use of modern communication mediums (social media, text messaging, paging, phone calls, emails, etc) in its internal communications:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	3.8%	2
Agree	36.5%	19
Undecided	9.6%	5
Disagree	42.3%	22
Strongly disagree	7.7%	4
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

Question 7

I believe that social media (Facebook, Twitter, My Space, You Tube, etc) could have a positive impact on Department communications:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	7.7%	4
Agree	30.8%	16
Undecided	30.8%	16
Disagree	23.1%	12
Strongly disagree	7.7%	4
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 8

I would support receiving information from the Department on my personal devices (cell phones, computers, landlines, etc):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	53.8%	28
Agree	26.9%	14
Undecided	9.6%	5
Disagree	9.6%	5
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 9

I believe that all necessary information gets to where it needs to go efficiently and sufficiently:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	0.0%	0
Agree	44.2%	23
Undecided	23.1%	12
Disagree	28.8%	15
Strongly disagree	3.8%	2
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 10

I believe that information is evenly distributed across like levels of responsibility in the Department regardless of station or shift:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	0.0%	0
Agree	21.2%	11
Undecided	25.0%	13
Disagree	34.6%	18
Strongly disagree	19.2%	10
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 11

The department "grapevine" typically relays information faster than official channels:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	11.5%	6
Agree	50.0%	26
Undecided	15.4%	8
Disagree	21.2%	11
Strongly disagree	1.9%	1
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 12

Knowledge is sometimes withheld because "information is power":		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	28.8%	15
Agree	23.1%	12
Undecided	17.3%	9
Disagree	28.8%	15
Strongly disagree	1.9%	1
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 13

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Communication is a one-way street, it comes down from above but doesn't go the other way:		
Strongly agree	7.7%	4
Agree	21.2%	11
Undecided	19.2%	10
Disagree	40.4%	21
Strongly disagree	11.5%	6
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 14

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I feel that I can openly communicate with anyone in the Department at any time regardless of rank or position:		
Strongly agree	11.5%	6
Agree	28.8%	15
Undecided	15.4%	8
Disagree	30.8%	16
Strongly disagree	13.5%	7
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 15

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
There are things I need to know that just don't get passed along:		
Strongly agree	5.8%	3
Agree	32.7%	17
Undecided	23.1%	12
Disagree	36.5%	19
Strongly disagree	1.9%	1
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 16

I believe that information is evenly shared across the Department by executive level management:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	7.8%	4
Agree	37.3%	19
Undecided	21.6%	11
Disagree	23.5%	12
Strongly disagree	9.8%	5
answered question		51
skipped question		1

Question 17

I believe that information is evenly shared across the Department by mid-level management:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	1.9%	1
Agree	34.6%	18
Undecided	34.6%	18
Disagree	21.2%	11
Strongly disagree	7.7%	4
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 18

I believe that information is evenly shared across the Department by front-line supervisors:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	5.8%	3
Agree	48.1%	25
Undecided	17.3%	9
Disagree	26.9%	14
Strongly disagree	1.9%	1
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 19

I feel comfortable communicating with my immediate supervisor:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	43.1%	22
Agree	41.2%	21
Undecided	5.9%	3
Disagree	5.9%	3
Strongly disagree	3.9%	2
answered question		51
skipped question		1

Question 20

I feel comfortable communicating with everyone in my chain-of-command:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	31.4%	16
Agree	33.3%	17
Undecided	9.8%	5
Disagree	13.7%	7
Strongly disagree	11.8%	6
answered question		51
skipped question		1

Question 21

I would feel comfortable disagreeing with someone with a higher rank than me if done with respect and in the proper setting:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	7.8%	4
Agree	51.0%	26
Undecided	9.8%	5
Disagree	19.6%	10
Strongly disagree	11.8%	6
answered question		51
skipped question		1

Question 22

I believe that internal communications in this Department are better than the majority of similar organizations in our local area:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	9.8%	5
Agree	35.3%	18
Undecided	35.3%	18
Disagree	11.8%	6
Strongly disagree	7.8%	4
answered question		51
skipped question		1

Question 23

I believe that internal communications in this Department are better than the majority of similar organizations across the nation:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	5.8%	3
Agree	28.8%	15
Undecided	48.1%	25
Disagree	9.6%	5
Strongly disagree	7.7%	4
answered question		52
skipped question		0

Question 24

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions pertinent to this subject matter. Comments will be used generically and won't be tied to any identifiable information.	
Answer Options	Response Count
	12
answered question	12
skipped question	40

Verbatim Responses to Question 24

"Leadership on my shift is autocratic. Therefore, communication is inadequate. Thank you for allowing a format to communicate without retribution. Rarely are the front line people able to evaluate the mid-level management (even if it wasn't the intent of this survey)."

"The alph-numeric pager system is old and outdated technology that should be replaced by text. I think it is also overused with non-pertinent information that everybody doesn't always need to know, i.e. burning permits for off duty shifts, or info only about ongoing calls that do not require call back, or fire watch notifications for off duty shifts. Training opportunities and professional development opportunities are not evenly communicated. Opportunities are given to specific

personnel often because of a personal relationship with a supervisor. Other personnel are not aware of the opportunites until they hear that a specific employee will be participating in it. Feed back, at least on my shift, is not wanted and repurcussions do follow any disagreement. Communication is not open for fear of reprisal. Front line supervisors are less willing to defend or support a subordinate for fear of reprisal.”

“Need to use personal Cell Phones for pages - Can be an option but I would use it and I know several others would as well”

“Although I feel like the opportunity to speak openly to the entire department is encouraged, I do not necessarily feel comfortable doing so.”

“Answers to questions 22 and 23 are unknown. How would I know the internal communications of an organization that I am external to?”

“Alot of my problems are not receiving information from other shifts about things happening at my station. Other issues are not trusting upper levels to respect my thoughts and the trouble it causes when you do speak out.”

“There are individuals within the organization that I do not feel comfortable communicating with on any level. Those individuals disrupt the communication process. Overall the organization does a pretty good job. Just a few bad apples bringing down whole.”

“A lot of your questions are too general, for the most part the organization communicates well, but I had to put undecided on alot of questions because there is a BC who does hold information as power and you can't disagree with him respectfully. I think alot of the internal communication issues could potentially lead back to one person. But that's just my opinion.”

“Communucations will never be as effective as we all would like until there is a commitment at all ranks within the organization to be the source or driver of information. Assumptions kill effective communications. My story will never be as good as the one written in the minds of other people.”

“The commutations with in our department is one sided. High ranks will only ask questions to those personal that will give them the answers they want to here, and avoid the personnel tell them facts. Personal will not seek up, out of fear and retaliation.”

“I feel things have gotten better in the last couple of years. I no there is still alot of Knowledge is power still in this department. Its to bad because this is and alway's has been a great place to work and for these few people who act this way they need to remember when they retire all that gold means nothing and they become human again.”

“The biggest obstacle to internal communications happens at the roadblock of the shift commanders. Some share information readily while others hold on to it or don't disperse it to all companies.”

Appendix B

LFD Communication Preferences Questionnaire

Question 1

| Which of the communication mediums below are effective or would be effective for internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department? (select all that apply).		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Face to face	95.7%	44
Telephone (landline)	56.5%	26
Mobile Phone	45.7%	21
Push-To-Talk (Nextel, Direct Connect)	23.9%	11
Two-Way Radio	8.7%	4
Alphanumeric pager	26.1%	12
Text messaging	54.3%	25
Email	87.0%	40
Instant Messaging	13.0%	6
Bulletin Board (physical)	6.5%	3
Paper newsletter (distributed)	13.0%	6
Electronic Newsletter	34.8%	16
Blog	4.3%	2
Website postings (online bulletin board)	21.7%	10
Facebook	6.5%	3
My Space	0.0%	0
Twitter	6.5%	3
You Tube	2.2%	1
Other Social Media	4.3%	2
	answered question	46
	skipped question	0

Which of the communication mediums below are effective or would be effective for internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department? (select all that apply).
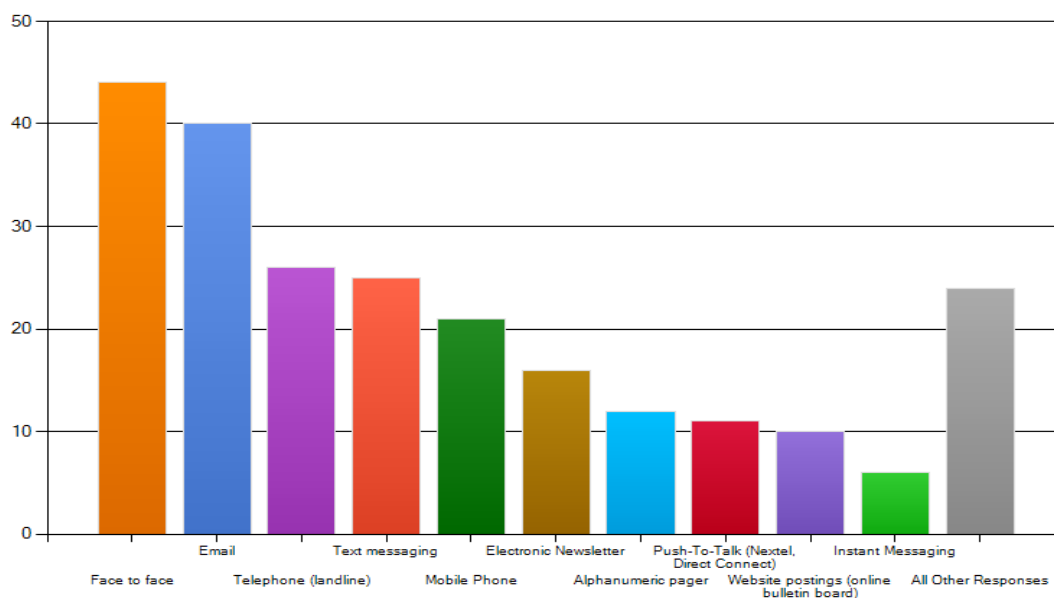
Question 2

Rank the following communication types in order of your preference for internal communications at the Lenexa Fire Department by selecting the button corresponding to your ranking. 1 is your top choice and 12 would be your last choice. Only one choice per type and number ranking.

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Rating Average	Response Count
Face to face	35	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.98	43
Phone (cell or landline)	0	24	3	5	3	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	3.43	40
Push-To-Talk (Nextel, Direct Connect)	0	0	7	1	5	1	5	1	4	3	7	4	7.63	38
Two-Way Radio	0	1	1	1	5	5	3	4	0	7	7	4	8.21	38
Alphanumeric Pager	1	3	2	9	4	5	2	0	6	3	1	4	6.40	40
Text message	3	1	11	8	4	1	6	1	4	1	1	0	4.95	41
Email	5	8	10	11	4	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	3.69	45
Social Media (Facebook / Twitter / Etc)	1	0	1	1	2	2	3	4	4	2	4	13	9.16	37
Physical Bulletin Board	0	1	0	0	2	1	7	10	1	7	4	6	8.77	39
Online Bulletin Board	0	0	2	1	3	10	4	5	6	3	3	3	7.65	40
Paper newsletter (distributed)	0	0	1	2	2	5	4	4	7	7	5	3	8.38	40
Electronic Newsletter	0	2	5	4	6	3	3	8	5	3	2	0	6.46	41
										answered question				46
										skipped question				0
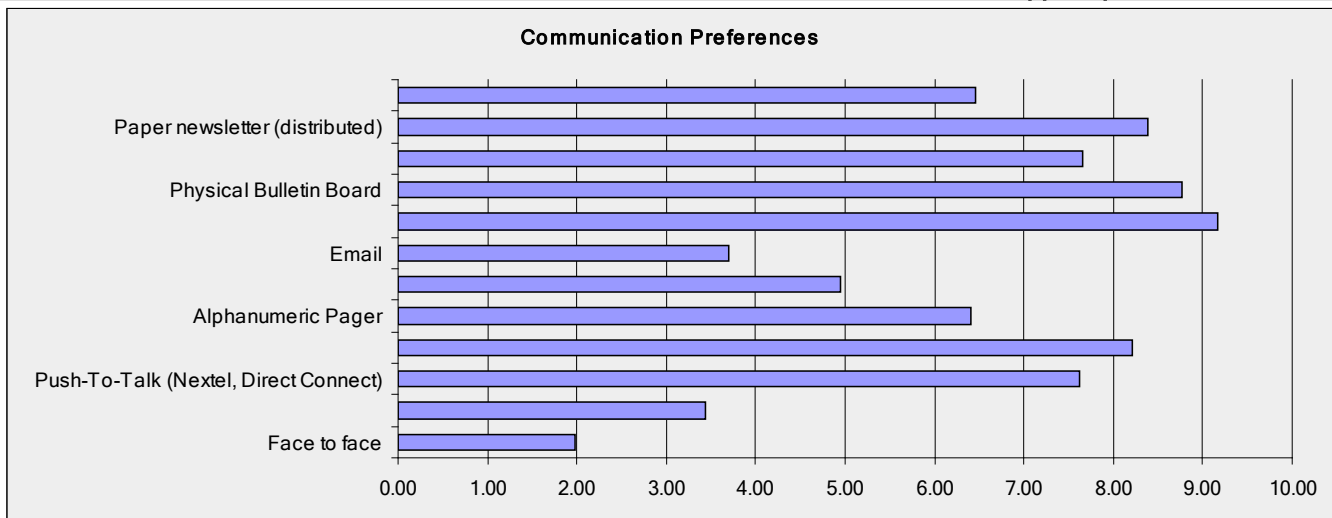
Note – the shorter the chart bar, the higher it was ranked (1 was best, 12 was worst)